THE

EVIDENCE;

OR,

Religious and Moral Gazette.

RELIGION AND MORALITY ARE THE BASIS OF HUMAN FELICITY.

VOL. I.] NOVEMBER 21, 1807. [No 42

AN

EXPOSTULATORY ADDRESS

TO THE

MEMBERS of the METHODIST SOCIETY IN IRELAND.

BY JOHN WALKER,

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(Continued.)

BRETHREN,

THE methodistic idea of sanctification is, in plain English, this: that the corrupt nature of man becomes in believers less and less corrupt, through the influence of divine grace aiding their exertions: till at length it becomes wholly good, perfectly purified from all evil; and this of course *instantaneously*: for, as Mr. Wesley observes, "If sin cease before death, there must in the nature of the thing be an *instantaneous* change—there must be a last minute wherein it does exist, and a first wherein it *does not*." Ib. (Wesley's minutes) page 39.—So that a man, under the work of grace, becomes first, in Mr. Fletcher's phrascology, a *carnal penitent*, then a christian believer, then a perfect christian. (*Fletcher's last check*, page 115, 116.)

Now I scruple not to pronounce the whole of this idea unscriptural, from first to last, though very natural, and harmonizing, more than its supporters are aware, with the popular ideas of christianty, which prevail among the carnal world. According to scripture, I am not warranted to consider it any part of the work of grace to *mend* our fallen nature. That nature is as bad—as wholly evil—in a believer, as in an unbeliever: as bad in the most established believer, as in the weakest—as bad in Paul the apostle, just finishing his course, and ready to receive the crown of righteousness, as in Saul of Tarsus, a blasphemer, and a persecutor of the church of Christ. Indeed if that old nature, called in scripture the *flesh*, became during our christian course less and less evil, the believer would have less & less occasion to watch against the flesh, "to deny himself, to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to walk not after the flesh," &c.—And if, at any period, it became purged from all evil, it would then become a christian duty "to fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind."—But the scriptures declare, and the experience of every believer to the end confirms it, that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;" that these

two are "contrary the one to the other :"—that the carnal mind, or flesh, or corrupt nature, is not only at enmity with God—(if it were only so, it might perhaps in time become a friend)—but is in itself "enmity against God ;" that it not only "is not subject to the law of God," but indeed "cannot be." The scriptures represent the whole course of the believer here below, as warfare, not only against the world and the devil, but against the flesh, that most dangerous ally of both : and give us no reason to suppose, that any part of this warfare ceases, but with the present mortal life. The opposite view, which you are taught, is certainly much more self-complacent ; but that will not recommend it to the better mind of a believer. It would be much more gratifying to the pride of our hearts, to think that however bad we may be naturally, yet we are not so bad but that we may be *mended;* and it is the general idea of all men—the most careless and the most profane. But indeed, our most strenuous exertions to effect that object, are but spending our strength in vain : and it is worse than in vain, where any flatter themselves they have attained it.

WHAT difference then, it may be asked, is there between the believer and the unbeliever? Is it only that the former subscribes to a creed which the latter disbelieves ? and can a difference so small as this, constitute the one accepted in the sight of God, as righteous, and bind the other under condemnation ? My brethren by no means. The difference between them is infinitely great. The believer is, by the rich mercy and saving power of God, brought out of that state of nature, in which all lie originally since the fall of man, *children of that world* "which lieth in the wicked one,"—*children of disobedience,* in whose hearts "the God of this world reigneth"—*children of wrath,* under the curse annexed as the immutable penalty to every transgression of the divine law. Out of this guilty and corrupt mass, dead in trespasses and sins, the believer is brought, not by the merit of his faith, but by the mercy and power of God, into a state of union with the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of his mystical body, of that church which he has redeemed, and to every member of which HE is made of GOD, wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

CONSIDER well, brethren, that passage (1 Cor. i, xxx.) from which the latter words are taken. Observe in it the declaration of the author of the change which has taken place in the state of believers—God, that God against whom we have all sinned, and by whose grace alone any sinner can be saved ; "*of him* are ye in Christ Jesus"—not of yourselves, of your faithfulness or your works, but "of him." Observe in it a declaration of the *new state* in which believers are placed ; they are "in Christ Jesus." Here is that union of Christ and his church, which the apostle pronounces to be "a great mystery," (Ephes. v. 32.) but which is a glorious truth pervading the old testament and the new ; that union, the closeness of which is shadowed out to us in scripture, by the union of husband and wife, who are "no more two, but one flesh"—of a tree and its branches, of a body and its members, &c. Observe again, in the same passage, a declaration of all the blessed consequences which accrue to believers from this union : "Christ is made unto them, wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." And observe well, that their sanctification is declared to be among these consequences, distinct indeed from their righteousness or justification, but equally

resulting from their being in Christ; agreeably to that description which is given of them in the beginning of the same chapter (1 Cor. 1, 2,) as "sanctified in Christ Jesus."

But what are we to understand by being sanctified, or made holy? I answer in a word; separated unto God, so as to be brought into a particular relation to him, 'appropriated to his use and service. That this separation, from common purposes to sacred, is the litaral meaning of the Hebrew word every one acquainted with the original knows: and it may appear evident even to those who are not acquainted with the original, from the application of the terms *holy* and *holiness*, in scripture, to things and places as well as to persons; as well as from their application to the Jewish people, in their collective capacity, as separated by the Lord from all the nations of the earth, to be "his peculiar people," for the purposes for which he had selected them. (See Levit. xx, 24, 26. Deut. vii, 6. xiv, 2.) For still greater and more gracious purposes are believers "chosen out of the world," and separated from it, by being brought into union with Christ —even "that God may show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards them, by Christ Jesus." And thus are they all alike "sanctified in him," from the babe in Christ to the Father; "a holy nation, and a peculiar people to the Lord"---no one of them more or less so than another.

In consequence of the same union, "the spirit of holiness," the spirit of life and of power, of love and of a sound mind, the Spirit of God, with the fulness of which the Lord Jesus their head was anointed by the Father, dwells in them, and descends upon them, producing in them the fruits of holiness—even that cluster of every heavenly affection, which is all declared to be "the fruit of the spirit;" "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." (Gal. v. 22, 23.) And these fruits are produced in them by their being kept 'abiding in Christ, (John xv. 4, 5.) living by the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved them and given himself for them, [Gal. ii. 20.] walking in Christ Jesus the Lord, as they have received him.'[Col. ii. 6.] And they are kept thus abiding in Christ by the Spirit's keeping them under a continual conviction of their need of him, as poor sinners, who have in themselves neither righteousness nor strength; and testifying to their hearts of him in whom alone they 'have righteousness and strength,' in whom alone 'all the seed of Israel is justified and shall glory; saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation;' See Isa. xlv. 17, 24, 25. testifying of his offices and character, of the fulness of grace and truth, of love and saving power, which it has pleased the Father should dwell in him. Col. i. 19. Thus are believers kept *by the power of God through faith* unto salvation: 1 Pet. i. 5. and thus do they grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

This work of the spirit, and these fruits of holiness, are indeed various, in various believers; and in the same believer at various times: and far be it from me, to assign a low standard for the possible degrees of them! In fact I know *no limit* to them, any more than to "the unsearchable riches of Christ," or to the Almighty power of God. It is an unchangeable truth of God, that 'if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his:' and where that spirit really dwells, there will be the fruits of the spirit--and where there is that fruit, there will be increasing fruit.

John xv. 2. But they mistake the nature of that work, and these fruits of the Spirit, who imagine that it is a work, which improves our corrupt nature, or makes it cease to be corrupt and capable of any good fruit.

Judge, brethren, what I say. Examine it by the revealed word of God, and not by the maxims of your earthly teachers; and the Lord give you a right understanding in all things!

Very different indeed from the views which I have endeavored to propose, are the views which you have been accustomed to receive, from many of Mr. Wesley's and most of Mr. Fletcher's writings.--- Mr. W. tells you [Minutes, &c. ut supra, dag. 4. 39.] 'that men are justified before they are sanctified---that from the moment we are justified, there may be a gradual sanctification, and that there must be an instantaneous change,' in our life-time through which sin shall cease to exist in us; to which change indeed the term *sanctification* has been, for some time past, almost exclusively applied by you. This is your favorite system; and forgive me, brethren, when in faithfulness and love to you, I avow my persuasion that it is a mass of the most dangerous errors.

Error being generally prolific, Mr. F. in defending this system, in those controversial works of his, the study of which constitutes the education of a Methodist, has indeed multiplied the errors of it awfully. I do consider that his polemic writings strike at every principle of divine truth; and are the more dangerous, on account of the vain of apparent piety and fervent zeal, that runs through them; as well as on account of that logical subtlety which pervades them, and which, though easily detected by men accustomed to reason closely, must yet impose itself for argument on the generality of readers. I say nothing of the unchristian misrepresentation which fills his pages, of his aspersions and insinuations against those who opposed his errors, as if they were on that account adverse to the strictness of a life devoted to God; aspersions and insinuations, conveyed so much in the language of humility and love, that the motto of his works might well be, 'his words are smoother than oil, and yet be they very swords.' It is not in vindication of their character I write; it is to warn you against his corruptions of the word of God.

As a specimen of these corruptions, and as connected with the error I have been last combatting, I call your attention to Mr. F's doctrine of an *evangelical law*, which he asserts his perfect christian perfectly fulfils; while he is forced to acknowledge that the most advanced christian in the prosent state falls short of the obedience which the stricter moral law of God required. The latter he calls, The Creator's anti-evangelical, paradisaical law of innocence,' and the former, A milder law, adapted to our present state and circumstances,'---the evangelical, mediatorial, and remedying law of our Redeemer.' [Fletcher's last check, &c. page 15, 16, and passim. London, printed by R. Hawes, 1775.] Now I am bold to say, that this is the language of a man ignorant both of of the divine law, and of the gospel, though it is a language perfectly corresponding with the popular divinity current in the world. Speak to the most openly carnal professor of christianity, and you will find that without ever having read Mr. F's works, his system is the same, only in a less pious garb. He will admit that, according to the strict and

perfect law of God, he is a sinner to be sure like the rest of the world; and that judged by it he would be condemned; though he thinks it would be rather hard that he should be judged by so severe a rule. But he comforts himself with the consideration, that Christ has introduced *a milder law, adapted to our present state and circumstances;* and that under this remedial law, his deviations from the former are rather to be reckoned innocent infirmities, than damning sins.

But be assured, brethren, there never did, nor ever will proceed from God, any moral law, but *one*, which is *immutable* and *perfect* like himself, *holy, just and good.* However variously promulgated, the spirit of it has ever been comprised in these two respects, in which the Lord Jesus summed it up, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. 'Sin is the transgression of the law;' not as Mr. Fletcher says, [Last check, &c. p. 14.] of 'a divine law,'---varying according to the various circumstances of men; but of that one; unchangeable law of the one; unchangeable God, from the curse of which Christ has redeemed his people, and of which he is 'the end,' or accomplishment, "for righteousness to every one that believeth."

What does Mr. F. mean by calling this law of God "*anti-evangelical?*" It contains not indeed, the gospel; but, blessed be God! it is not against the gospel. 'Is the law against the promises of God? God forbid!' It would truly be against such a gospel as Mr. F. contends for: but that only proves that the system he contends for 'is not the gospel.' Christ came, "not to destroy the law, but to fulfil." "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid! exclaims the apostle---nay, we establish the law." But certainly Christ would have come to destroy the law, and would have made it void through faith, if he had come to supercede that law by the introduction of another and a milder law.

I am willing to hope that Mr. F. saw not the consequences involved in his principles; but this does not lessen the danger of his principles, nor the importance of pointing out those consequences to you. And that his name has been so canonized among you, as to make it be considered little short of sacrilege, to oppose his principles; this while it renders the attempt a more ungrateful task, renders it at the same time the more necessary.

Forgetting then, for a moment, that the principle in his; look, I beseech you, at one of the monstrous consequences, with which it is pregnant. A milder law! What is the plain English of that? A law less perfect, i. e. a law imperfect, i. e. a law which *sanctions sin.* If the Creator gave one law, and that law was but 'holy, just, and good,' what must be inferred from the assertion that the Redeemer has introduced another and a milder law, but that the nature of moral good and evil is changed, or that the new law is neither holy, just, nor good?

But these are not the only moral laws, which Mr. F. has introduced. As his evangelical law is the standard to which a christian is to be perfecty conformed, in order to be his perfect christian; so he has another, a yet milder law, which was the standard of a Jew's perfection; and another milder still, which is the standard of a Gentile's perfectiou. [See his Last Check, page 67.] And why

he should have stopped there, and left out Turks, Infidels, and Heretics---I cannot see. But indeed I view his system as such a corrupt jumble of law and gospel, as is neither gospel nor law, but alike contrary to every essential principle of both ; while it is so flattering to the carnal pride and self righteousness of men, that I do not wonder it has attracted so many followers. Truly, brethren. I do not wish to offend or irritate you, by speaking thus plainly : but I remember what St. Paul says on the supposition that even 'an angel from Heaven should preach another gospel, than that which he preached ;' and I think it inconsistent with the allegiance we owe to our one Lord and Master, to hold the person of any man in such admiration, as to be deterred, by respect for his name, from the vindication of divine truth.

Error is not only a very prolific, but a very inconsistent thing : and among the inconsistences, in which you have been involved by embracing this error, that has long seemed to me of glaring magnitude ; that while you hold this deliverance from the inward being of all sin, before death, to be essentially necessary as a preparation for heaven, many of you, notwithstanding, profess to enjoy strong confidence, lively peace and often ecstatic joy, before you profess to have attained that deliverance. Now with what consistency can a man rejoice, in that state, in which he professes to believe that if he died, he would be damned ? Uncertain of the moment that will launch me into the eternal world, into an eternity of happiness or woe ; can I feel well-founded peace, while I believe that I am unprepared for an eternity of happiness ; in a condition, in which, if death were to overtake me, I could not be saved ? Such, according to your system, is the condition of every christian who has not arrived at this perfection. Comparatively few of the body [though alas ! these few are too many] profess to have arrived at it : yet you all commonly talk of high enjoyment. You will join with me, and justly, in lamenting the carnal security of common worldly professors, who speak peace to themselves, while they are ready to perish. But however awful their state, they are more consistent than you : for they flatter themselves that they may be saved as they are. The system you profess teaches that, even after having believed with the heart on the Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot be saved, but must perish for ever, unless a further work be wrought in you before death, to which you give the name of perfect sanctification : and yet without this change, multitudes among you talk highly indeed of the peace which they enjoy, and the transports which they feel. The truth of this observation will appear to those who do not know you personally, from a perusal of any among the number of biographical accounts which you have published. Now I own I can no more reconcile this your conduct to reason, than I can reconcile that your system to scripture.

For my own part, I am persuaded that the real believer, from the moment he is made a partaker of that precious faith, by which, receiving the record of God concerning his son, he 'flies for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him in the Lord Jesus Christ,' is as truly prepared for derth as ever he can be. Death is reckoned up, along with life and things present and things to come, among the 'all things' that are his. Having 'come to Christ that he may have life,' he is not cast out by him, but is received. [John vi. 37.] Being received by Christ,

he is *in him*, a member of his mystical body. Being in Christ, he has passed from death unto life, from darkness to light, from a state of condemnation and wrath and distance, as an alien to a state of acceptance and justification and nearness to God, as a child by adoption and grace. He is justified; he is sanctified; and if he were that moment to be called out of the world, he would 'die in the Lord,' in whom he is, and inherit the blessing which is pronounced on such. As to the noise which Mr. F. makes about our holding, what he chooses to call the doctrine of a 'death purgatory,' because we hold that the believer will not bring with him into the next world any of that fleshly nature, against which he has to contend during his continuance in this; I shall only say that it is one of those arts of unfair subtlety, which he employs for perplexing the minds of his readers, and prejudicing them against those whom he opposed; while I believe he knew well, that the men, whom he opposed, were as far as himself, from attributing to death any part of that work of salvation, which wholly belongs to Christ.

(To be continued.)

Character of the Apostle Paul, by MILNER.

---We have now finished the lives of two men of singular excellece nnquestionably, James the Just, and Paul of Tarsus. The former, by his uncommon virtues, attracted the esteem of a whole people, which were full of the strongest prejudices against him: and in regard to the latter, the question may be asked with great propriety, whether such another man ever existed among all those, who have inherited the corrupted nature of Adam? He had evidently a soul large and capacious, and possessed of those seemingly contradictory excellences, which, whenever they appear in combination, fail not to form an extraordinary character. But not only his talents were great and various; his learning also was profound and extensive; and many persons with far inferior abilities and attainments have effected national revolutions, or otherwise distinguished themselves in the history of mankind. His consummate fortitude was tempered with the rarest gentleness, and the most active charity. His very copious and vivid imagination was chastised by the most accurate judgment, and was connected with the closest argumentative powers. Divine grace alone could compose so wonderful a temperature; insomuch, that for the space of near thirty years after his conversion, this man, whose natural haughtiness and fiery temper had hurried him into a very sanguinary course of prosecution, lived the friend of mankind; returned good for evil continually; was a model of patience and benevolence, and steadily attentive only to heavenly things while yet he had a taste, a spirit, and a genius, which might have shone among the greatest statesmen and men of letters that ever lived.

Hist. of the church of Christ, vol. I. p. 127. 2d ed.

SELECT SENTENCES.

IT is vain for men to turn away their thoughts from that eternity which is before them, as if they were able to destroy it by denying it a place in their imaginations. It exists in spite of them. It advanceth unobserved; and death, which is to

draw the curtain from it, will quickly usher them into it.

Pascal.

The knowledge of God, without the knowledge of our own misery, is the nurse of pride. The knowledge of our own misery, without the knowledge of Jesus Christ, is the mother of depair. But the true knowledge of Jesus Christ exempts alike from pride and despair; by giving us at once a sight not only of God and of our misery, but also of the mercy of God in the relief of our misery.

Ib.

ANECDOTE.

The late Rev. Dr. Nisbet, celebrated for his profound erudition, and ready wit, being asked, How he would define modern philosophy? replied, That "it consists in believing every thing but the truth, and exactly in proportion to the want of evidence; or, to use the words of a poet, In making windows that shut out the light, and passages that lead to nothing."

Experience shows that those who have been reformed from a life of scandalous immorality, or of stupid carelessness about eternity, to a life of strict integrity and devotion, are persons whose constant practice it has been since that happy change, to apply by prayer for divine grace. This may be said to be evident from experience, if mutual faith and trust be allowed, and the testimony of multitudes of the best men in the world, be reckoned an argument of any weight. Never any yet refuted them by contrary experiences: a devout man praying only for happiness, without praying for holiness, is a character yet unheard of.

M'Laurin.

Reflections.

What ecstatic joys waft, to an almost incredible height, the soul of the penitent who, upon his bed, opens his heart in secret fervency, to Him who knows his frailty and will hear his prayer! But there is a far more desirable state of happiness, to which a mortal may attain, even in this life, after having assiduously enquired of himself, what advantages he has derived from *Divine Influence*. It is to contrast his own *demerit* with the actual *reward* or *blessings* which he has received from divine Providence—and to feel and know their immense difference----then, with a grateful and obsequious mind, to *feel* the pangs of native depravity, and *know* the transporting truth, that the Lord is omnipresent, merciful and almighty, and that, thro' Christ, *saving grace* is adequate to his *salvation*.

F.

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